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Intelligence Activities Must Not Dictate Policy

The authors of a detailed study on the U2 affair warn that to an extraordinary extent "information and activities that are secret to the American people are shaping the nation's destiny".

David Wise and Thomas B. Ross, drawing from their authoritative study, reveal secrecy has become such an accepted fact of life in Washington that a whole new layer of government has developed with the power to conceal its mistakes behind a cloak of national security.

It was shown by the background of the decision to send a U2 flight over Russia prior to a date before the scheduled meeting of President Dwight D. Eisenhower and Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev.

The authors state categorically that was not simply an unfortunate coincidence in timing—that the sending of the plane was directly related to the summit.

Wise and Ross say that by May, 1960, the desire for intelligence had become the overriding factor in connection with the U2 program. "Instead of serving as a basis for policy making, intelligence gathering had become an end in itself."

As the summit meeting drew approached there was a fear, according to the authors, the meeting might result in an international rapprochement which would make further flights politically impossible so an effort was made to get one last mission under the wire.

The Central Intelligence Agency was less worried about the consequences of the U2 flight on the summit meeting than it was the summit meeting might endanger the U2 program.

This is a clear case of putting the cart before the horse. Intelligence is supposed to be an aid to those making policy, but the actions of those controlling the U2 program ended up determining the national policy and foreign actions.

Congress needs to scrutinize more closely our activities in the field of intelligence. The ability to determine national policy must not rest in the hands of unknown persons operating in secret with the power to hide their mistakes.

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